

Message Text

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TAGS: CGEN CSCE PL
SUBJECT: TOURIST COMPLAINTS ABOUT POLISH CUSTOMS PROCEDURES

REF: 77 WARSAW 8874

1. ON JANUARY 13, EMBOFF MET WITH MR. KAZIMIERZ JANUSZ, DIRECTOR OF THE POLISH CUSTOMS BUREAU, TO DISCUSS COMPLAINTS THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED FROM U.S. CITIZENS REGARDING CUSTOMS CONTROLS THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED WHILE LEAVING POLAND.

2. EMBOFF REVIEWED SEVERAL CASES INVOLVING U.S. CITIZENS, BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION BY THEIR CONGRESSMEN, OF DISCOURTEOUS TREATMENT DURING THEIR DEPARTURE FROM WARSAW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, INCLUDING CONFISCATION BY CUSTOMS OFFICIALS OF PERSONAL ITEMS BROUGHT FROM THE U.S., AND FORCED STRIPPING BY THESE SAME OFFICIALS. EMBOFF SAID WE WANTED TO DETERMINE THE FACTS IN THESE INDIVIDUAL CASES, AND LEARN THE DETAILS OF CURRENT POLISH CUSTOMS REGULATIONS TO AVOID SUCH INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE.

3. MR. JANUSZ SAID THAT PART OF THE PROBLEM WAS THAT U.S. TOURISTS OFTEN WERE UNAWARE OF POLISH CUSTOMS REGULATIONS. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT POLISH CONSULATES IN THE U.S. HAVE NOT ALWAYS HAD THIS INFORMATION

READILY AVAILABLE, AND THUS WERE UNABLE TO COUNSEL TOURISTS PROPERLY.

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HE SAID HOWEVER, THAT HE IS IN TOUCH WITH THE POLISH FOREIGN MINISTRY, AND THAT CUSTOMS INFORMATION SHEET IS NOW BEING PREPARED IN SEVERAL LANGUAGES FOR DISTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULATES IN THE U.S. THESE WOULD BE GIVEN TO AMERICAN TOURISTS AT THE TIME THEY APPLY FOR THEIR VISAS.

4. MR. JANUSZ SAID HE KNEW OF THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED BY

U.S. TOURISTS IN POLAND THIS PAST SUMMER, AND SAID THAT THE INCIDENTS HE HAD HEARD OF WERE CONFINED TO WARSAW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. MR. JANUSZ EXPLAINED THAT THE STAFF AT THE AIRPORT WAS CHANGED THREE TIMES IN THE PAST YEAR. AS A RESULT, THIS PAST SUMMER, THE CUSTOMS INSPECTORS WERE YOUNG, AND NOT WELL TRAINED IN THE PERFORMANCE

OF THEIR DUTIES. MR. JANUSZ APOLOGIZED FOR THE UNFORTUNATE CASES OF DISROBINGS THAT TOOK PLACE, STATED THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED, AND PREDICTED THEY WOULD NOT TAKE PLACE IN THE FUTURE.

5. WITH RESPECT TO THE CONFISCATION OF PERSONAL ITEMS PURCHASED IN THE U.S., MR. JANUSZ POINTED OUT THAT POLISH REGULATIONS FORBID THE EXPORT OF GOLD IN AMOUNTS OVER 50 GRAMS. HE SPECULATED THAT, WITHOUT PROOF OF PURCHASE, A CUSTOMS INSPECTOR MIGHT WELL HAVE CONFISCATED AN ITEM EXCEEDING THIS AMOUNT WITHOUT KNOWING THAT THE ITEM WAS ORIGINALLY PURCHASED IN THE U.S. TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION, MR. JANUSZ SAID HE WOULD INSTRUCT ALL CUSTOMS OFFICERS TO INFORM TOURISTS ENTERING POLAND THAT THEY MUST DECLARE ANY GOLD JEWELRY EXCEEDING 50 GRAMS. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD INCLUDE THIS INFORMATION IN THE CUSTOMS INFORMATION SHEET CURRENTLY BEING PREPARED BY HIS OFFICE.

6. FIVE PARTICULAR CASES INVOLVING FORCED STRIPPINGS, AND/OR CONFISCATION OF PERSONAL ITEMS WERE BROUGHT UP AT THIS MEETING BY EMBOFF, INCLUDING THAT OF MRS. EUGENIA BROWN (REFTEL). RM. JANUSZ OFFERED TO INVESTIGATE EACH CASE PERSONALLY AND FORWARD A UNCLASSIFIED

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REPLY TO THE EMBASSY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

7. SEVERAL PLANNED CHANGED IN POLISH CUSTOMS REGULATIONS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING AND WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY TO THE DEPARTMENT.
DAVIES

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